



# Social Questions

## BULLETIN

of the Methodist Federation for Social Service (unofficial), an organization which rejects the method of the struggle for profit as the economic base for society; which seeks to replace it with social-economic planning in order to develop a society without class distinctions and privileges.

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### Jim Crow Democracy

In these days of national and international stress, we are hearing a great deal about democracy, about the ideals of the Founding Fathers, about our Constitution, and about the Bill of Rights. We are being told much about the horrors of totalitarianism, and how the liberty of the individual is being smothered by the dictatorships spreading over Europe.

Yet, in our own country, which is acknowledged to be the leading democracy in the world, we have democracy with reservations. Approximately one-tenth of our population is made up of Negro citizens who, in the main, have never been accorded their full rights as citizens. They are the victims of a system which bears startling resemblance to the system devised by Adolf Hitler for his treatment of minority groups.

#### IN THE ARMED SERVICES

It took the inauguration of the huge national defense program to bring into sharp focus the present status of the Negro in American life.

When the War Department early in 1940 began a campaign of enlistment in an effort to enlarge the Army, Negro applicants in all sections of the country were curtly refused at recruiting offices. Incidents in San Francisco, New Orleans, Kansas City, Denver, Chicago, Detroit, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Washington, New York, and Boston proved that the Army had a definite policy of refusing to enlist Negroes. At one place, Charlotte, N. C., a Negro high school teacher who accompanied four colored youths to the recruiting office was beaten up by the sergeant in charge because he asked a question on enlistment.

When the conscription law was passed, it was announced that Negroes would be drafted according to their percentage in population, and that out of an expected 900,000 trainees about 88,000 would be colored.

Prior to this time, Negroes had been limited in the Army to service in two regiments of infantry and two of cavalry. One cavalry regiment had been broken into three parts and distributed to West Point, N. Y., Ft. Myer, Va., and Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas. The other cavalry regiment was at Ft. Riley, Kansas; one infantry regiment was at Ft. Benning, Ga., and the other at Ft. Huachuca, Arizona. All four were doing so-called "dog-robber" work, that is, mowing lawns, running errands, waiting on officers, cleaning stables, polishing saddles, giving riding lessons to cadets, etc. Not one outfit was receiving combat training with modern arms.

Obviously 88,000 men could not be crammed into four regiments, so the Army extended its Jim Crow policy. For the draftees, it outlined additional Negro infantry regiments, several coast artillery (anti-aircraft) regiments, as well as several field artillery units. In addition, there was the usual service in the quartermaster corps, and in the labor battalions of the engineering corps.

Up to March, 1941, Negroes were barred absolutely from the air corps, but in March it was announced that 276 would be trained as ground crew members, and 33 as pilots, all in a Jim Crow training center near Tuskegee Institute, Alabama. Despite the fact that the Army has many air corps training centers, the handful of Negro pilot aspirants must wait until October 1, 1941, before they can begin training, for it will not be until that date that their entirely separate training center will be set up.

At the present time there are no Negroes in the tank corps or the signal corps. There are no Negroes in the marine corps. There are no Negroes in the coast artillery handling big guns, but some, as noted above, are in anti-aircraft units of the coast artillery. There is one small strictly segregated Negro coast guard station at Pea Island, near Manteo, North Carolina.

The Army would like to have as few Negro commissioned officers as possible. At the present time in the *regular army* there are only two Negro commissioned line officers: Brigadier General Benjamin O. Davis, Sr., and his son, Captain B. O. Davis, Jr. There are, of course, a few Negro dentists, doctors and chaplains holding commissions.

In addition, there are a goodly number of Negro commissioned officers in the federalized national guard units such as the 369th, New York; the 184th field artillery, formerly the 8th Illinois national guard; and the 372nd infantry.

In an announcement from The White House October 9, 1940, the strictly Jim Crow policy of the Army was reaffirmed. It held that Negroes must be confined to separate units, that no mixed units would be tolerated, and no Negro commissioned officers installed, even in the all-Negro units except in the federalized Negro national guard units where these officers already were commissioned. In accordance with that policy, which aroused a storm of bitter protest, and which still is resented and protested, the Negro regiments in our Army have Negro non-commissioned officers and white commissioned officers.

One result of the protest against the October 9 statement was the appointment of Dean William H. Hastie of the Howard University Law School, Washington, D.



C., as Civilian Aide to the Secretary of War, with the special duty of handling the interests of Negro soldiers. The other result was the appointment of the then Colonel Benjamin O. Davis, Sr., to be Brigadier General, the first in the history of the United States Army.

As for the Navy, its officials have refused adamantly to revise the policy even by one inch. Negroes are not accepted for any service in the Navy except as mess attendants. Here they receive the lowest pay and no promotion. They learn no trades and are taught no naval combat work. They enter the Navy as servants, and when they leave it they are still servants, whereas white boys may enter the Navy, learn a trade, and return to civil life prepared to earn a better living—or they may stay in the Navy and win promotions and increases in pay.

### UNDER THE DRAFT ACT

Although feeble clauses were inserted in the Selective Service Act for the purpose of forestalling racial discrimination in its administration, Negro draftees soon found that they were up against the same old Jim Crow. In the first place, very few Negroes were appointed as members of local draft boards, although in all fairness it should be stated that many more were appointed than were so named in the 1917 draft. So far as can be determined, not one Negro was named on a local draft board in a southern state, but in several places Negroes were named as members of advisory boards. In South Carolina, after he had named all the official draft boards, advisory boards, and other boards set forth in the Selective Service Act, Governor Maybank appointed 120 Negroes throughout the state to wholly unofficial and powerless "Negro" advisory boards.

It soon became evident that the Army pattern of segregation would operate to delay the induction of Negro draftees and force the induction of white boys out of their turn. Many Negro youths whose numbers came up in November, December, and January, were refused by their induction centers on the ground that the Jim Crow Army camps for Negro troops had not been completed, and that the special personnel for their training had not itself finished its training. Thus, many a white boy who might not have had to go until March, April or May was inducted in December, January, and February.

One state, Connecticut, refused absolutely to go along with this plan and filled each draft call quota on the dates specified with whatever draftees came next, regardless of color. Connecticut officials, backed up by the Governor, took the fight to Selective Service headquarters in Washington and finally won out. All other states meekly accepted the discriminatory induction plans of the War Department.

### DISCRIMINATION IN INDUSTRY

In the second major aspect of the defense program—the turning out of munitions and supplies—Negro Americans found as much, if not more, discrimination than they met in the armed services. Billions upon billions were authorized and voted with hundreds of factories receiving defense contracts. But in few industries could the Negro find employment.

The most striking example of exclusion is to be found in airplane manufacturing, which is almost 100 per cent. lily-white. Indeed, in many airplane plants it was found that Nazi agents and Bund members had no difficulty in

finding employment, whereas loyal American Negroes were turned away by personnel managers.

To call the roll of the big airplane plants and airplane engine factories is to call the roll of industries which have bluntly refused to employ Negro Americans: Boeing, Martin, Curtiss Wright, Lockheed, Douglas, Consolidated, North American, Vultee, Ryan, Stearman, Beechcraft, Cessna, Waco, Brewster, Republic, and Grumman. Of these, only Douglas is recorded as having a Negro in its employ—one lone black aviation engineer, a graduate of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Stanford University.

United Aircraft, which makes Pratt and Whitney airplane engines and Hamilton propellers, is 100 per cent. lily-white. The Allison engine division of General Motors is 100 per cent. lily-white. North American Aviation, a General Motors subsidiary which makes thousands of training planes, recently announced through J. H. Kindelberger, its president and general manager: "Negroes will be considered only as janitors. . . . Under no circumstances will Negroes be employed as aircraft workers or mechanics. . . . Regardless of their training as aircraft workers we will not employ them in the North American plant."

It may be remarked here that General Motors, exclusive of subsidiaries, has received contracts in the amount of \$683,400,000. North American Aviation has received contracts in the amount of \$133,299,293.

The story is little different outside the aviation industry. A few thousand Negroes are working in steel. Very few, if any, are in munition plants making machine guns, bullets, rifles, etc. Very few, if any, are in the huge arsenals. Some few—very few—are employed in the shipyards, although the cry is for ships and more ships. Plants like Eastman Kodak and Sperry Gyroscope are maintaining a bar against Negro workers. In the great clothing factories and scores of small factories filling sub-contracts the Negro is absent except for some little unskilled work.

In the hundreds of millions of dollars that were spent for the construction of camps and the building of naval and air bases, little except unskilled jobs, and few of those, went to Negroes.

### LABOR AND NEGROES

Organized labor, largely through A. F. of L. unions, has played its part in keeping Negroes out of employment, but it is not true that the unions have been the chief obstacle. The employers have tried to pass the buck to the unions and the latter in turn have sought to place all the blame on employers.

The truth of the matter is that there are still some twenty or more A. F. of L. international unions that bar Negroes from membership by constitutional provision. Some of these unions maintain their lily-white policy rigidly; others have a system whereby auxiliary charters are granted to all-Negro units. These units are attached to the parent union but have no voice, no representation of their own at union meetings, may send no delegates to conventions, have no vote on policy, wages, hours, and working conditions. They must accept without question any arrangements made for them by the parent union.

An outstanding example of a union barring Negro employment in the defense program is furnished by Local



751 of the Aeronautic Mechanics Union, A. F. of L., in Seattle at the Boeing plant. The employers insisted that they could hire no one except members of Local 751. Local 751 has a "white" clause in its constitution. It was asserted recently that the union members voted at a meeting to rescind the color bar for membership but that the executive board of the union refused to carry out the mandate.

Even where there is no union opposition, many employers have refused to hire Negroes. For many years in the automobile industry, prior to the unionization by United Automobile Workers, General Motors employed only a handful of Negroes, although the Ford Company, its neighbor, was demonstrating right under its nose that Negroes and whites could work together in the production of automobiles.

Ironically enough, the Ford Company, which is known to have the most vicious general labor policy, has been the most generous in its employment of Negroes. In its Detroit plant, Negroes form normally one-eighth of the workers on the payroll. Thus for years, both through its Negro payroll and through subsidy of influential leaders of Negro opinion in Detroit, Ford has been building a powerful local opinion hostile to organized labor.

Organized labor, in the meantime, has taken little positive action to counteract this trend.

### OTHER DISCRIMINATIONS

Negroes are not only being excluded from employment in the national defense program, but they are having the greatest difficulty in securing training as skilled workers in the huge training program under way all over the country. They are running around in a vicious circle, being told by industry that it cannot employ them because they are not trained, and being told by crowded defense training schools that they cannot be enrolled because industry will not employ them.

In San Diego, Consolidated Aircraft told the Board of Education that there was no need for it to admit Negro boys to training classes because Consolidated would not hire them. Boeing in Seattle told its school board the same thing. Vultee told the Nashville, Tennessee, school board the same thing; and Curtiss-Wright gave the St. Louis school board the same information.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People discovered recently that even the training classes of government agencies are discriminating against Negroes. The NYA school in Kansas City, Missouri, offers eight or nine courses to white youths; but for Negro boys it has only two courses: building repair and maintenance, and health and hygiene. This means training for janitor jobs only.

The Negro's plight has been highlighted, merely, by the defense program. He has always been the victim of discrimination and segregation. In civil life he is shunted to separate and inferior schools in southern and border states. He is barred from, or jim crowed in, a vast number of public places. His housing has been wretched and his rents as high as the traffic will bear. He has always been a marginal employee—last hired and first fired. He gets the lowest wages.

Throughout the South, where the bulk of the Negro population resides, our colored fellow citizens are barred from voting by the poll tax, various tests for voters, and the operation of the Democratic white primary.

Thus it is that in our treatment of the Negro America has a pattern which is almost an exact duplicate of the Hitler pattern. In fact, an article in *The Nation*, March 1, by Hans Habe, entitled "The Nazi Plan for Negroes," outlines six points which might have been copied from America's credo on Negroes.

### DEMOCRACY BEGINS AT HOME

Even this brief and incomplete review of the malfunctioning of our democracy in respect to our largest minority, must surely raise the question of the moral position of our nation in its declared efforts against the dictator countries.

If we are to conduct an "all-out" effort against what President Roosevelt, in his March 15 speech, called "the forces of tyranny and oppression," why not begin at home? Mr. Roosevelt declared that every man, woman and child in America had a stake in the national defense effort.

What stake has the Negro? He is being asked to enlist and fight, sacrifice and work "for the democratic way of life." But the facts are indisputable that that way of life has meant for him largely ostracism, proscription, injustice and persecution in nearly every phase of American life.

Even in the great organized effort for the defense of the declared ideals he has been set apart in some instances and barred altogether in others. Must he sacrifice and fight for an economic system that contemptuously and brazenly offers him employment as a janitor? Must he defend a system where he and his children are ringed about with humiliating restrictions? What difference is there, in his mind, between this "freedom" and the "slavery" of totalitarianism?

Even more important than the effect upon the Negro is the effect upon America. Unless we are truly to bring into being tolerance and justice and equality of opportunity for all minorities, religious, racial, and political, democracy is doomed—and not by the guns, armies, and airplanes of Hitler, but by our own actions.

A leader in the fight to rid the nation of Jim Crow democracy has been the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, which has been in existence since 1909. It has a long history of battling particularly for the rights of the Negro under the Constitution, and generally for the soul of America. Seventeen victories affecting the rights of Negro citizens have been won by it in the United States Supreme Court. An unrelenting fight has been carried on by this interracial association wherever the basic democratic rights of black Americans have been trampled upon.

For thirty-two years it has been preaching the doctrines that now emerge from every radio loudspeaker and from every editorial page. It has been saying over and over, as it says now, that America can never come into the dream of the Founding Fathers as a truly New World until she takes democracy off the parchment hidden away in the Library of Congress and makes it come to life in the heart of every American. Then all the totalitarian powers of Europe and Asia cannot prevail against her.

—ROY WILKINS

(Mr. Wilkins is Assistant Secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 69 Fifth Avenue, New York City; and Editor of the *Crisis*.)



## U.C.C.D. Conference

"The Executive Committee of the United Christian Council for Democracy has decided that the time has come to call together the members of its constituent bodies — the Methodist Federation for Social Service, the Church League for Industrial Democracy and the Presbyterian, Evangelical, Baptist, Unitarian and Southern Churchmen groups—to consider what needs to be said and done by Christians concerning the social order that has produced the catastrophe in which all mankind is now involved. This includes the question of the kind of world which is to come out of the present destruction."

Watch for the announcement in the May issue of the BULLETIN as to when and where this conference will be held! There is a possibility that it may be held in Chicago May 26 and 27 just preceding the following conference.

## Methodist Conference

The Commission on World Peace of The Methodist Church has issued a nation-wide call to Methodists to assemble at Chicago May 28, 29, 30, to consider what is essential to a Christian World Order.

"The Conference will limit its work to an exploration from the Christian standpoint of the bases of a just and enduring peace. The Conference leaders and membership will be inclusive of persons holding diverse views on such questions as pacifism, aid to Britain, and the military involvement of the United States in present wars. . . ."

Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam will be the General Chairman. Expert resource leaders, nationally and internationally known, will speak.

Send your registration fee of \$2.00 immediately to the Commission at 740 Rush St., Chicago, Ill.

## Seminars

Charles Webber highly recommends these two Seminars for Federation members and others who wish to study the South or Mexico this summer:

1. *Religion and Labor Foundation Traveling Economic Seminar* through the South in July. Write to Willard Uphaus, 106 Carmel Street, New Haven, Connecticut.

2. *Mexican Horizons*. Two-week Seminars in Mexico City, beginning June 30 and ending August 23. Address Maria B. Heitner, 1710 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, Pa.

## Ford and Negroes

A group of leading Detroit Negro citizens, including the Detroit Secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, on April 9 issued a statement on the Ford Motor Company Strike. The following are excerpts:

"Detroit is today the scene of what may prove to be the greatest struggle in the history of our country. The strike in the River Rouge plant of the Ford Motor Company is not alone the concern of the men who were employed there. The matter is one of national importance. That is the way that we who are Negro Americans approach the issues involved.

"No one can deny that Mr. Ford has hired Negroes. Of course, when we consider the rate of unemployment among our people, Mr. Ford has done nothing in excess of democracy. Nor do we believe that a democratic act needs applause. But when we see the use to which Mr. Ford puts his Negro workers, we can only say: 'There was a method in his madness.' We are sceptical of democracy which produces racial conflicts as it operates.

"Mr. Ford is seeking to pit white labor against black. There is nothing more un-American, un-democratic, and subversive than such an act. . . ."

"The top leadership of the C.I.O. as opposed to the top leadership of the A.F.L. has come openly out for unity regardless of race, creed, or color. This marks a new stake in the American labor movement. This is democracy on the labor front, in its most elemental expression.

"We have to acknowledge that for Mr. Ford the N.L.R.A., the Wage and Hour Law, the Walsh-Healey Act, the Social Security Act are scraps of paper. The Ford Company stands as the champion of those who defy the law on the economic field.

"We are fearful that if the U.A.W.A.-C.I.O. loses a great blow will be struck against the Negro everywhere. We as a people have

made gains in the struggle for these laws. If Ford can successfully flout them, all other industrialists can also. Reaction in the South will be immeasurably strengthened by such an event.

"If in the North Negro labor cannot make gains when it has the support of white labor, how much less are the chances for the Southern Negro.

"Both at the last Congress of the National Negro Congress and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, John L. Lewis pledged the support of the C.I.O. to the struggle of the Negro people. The C.I.O. has kept faith we believe.

"We, therefore, take our stand behind the demands of the Auto Workers. Negroes have nothing permanent to gain through strike-breaking. No one has, the history of the labor struggle is proof of this. "We are interested in job security and in securing jobs for Negro workers, but not upon the basis of racial friction.

"The dangers ahead need not be exaggerated to be seen. But we believe that the solidarity of white and Negro labor can and will be maintained."

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